

Bogor, Indonesia

Refugee Education Project by Elite Open School

Mid-Semester Report



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Executive Summary

Since January 2018, Elite Open School has launched high school operations in refugee camps through local learning resource centers with the specific mission to arm these students with the skills and abilities necessary for them to survive but become future leaders in their communities. In short, this is not merely English literacy education nor learning for the sake of learning, but establishing foundational skill sets. To that end, EOS is providing accredited coursework pathways to an American high school diploma with two academic priorities of English proficiency to communicate at global standards and coding mastery through Javascript, Python, and Java. EOS believes that by achieving these goals, these students will be able to access opportunity and stability no matter where they go.

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About Dr. Winmar Way - Head of School, Elite Open School

Dr. Way received her PhD in Comparative Education from UCLA, and her MA in the same field from Stanford University. Both her MA and PhD research concerned refugee education, especially issues around educating refugees for English language proficiency, citizenship and civic participation throughout the resettlement process. As a Community Service Scholar while an undergraduate at Harvard College, Dr. Way worked extensively with the refugee and immigrant communities in Cambridge and Boston, in after-school academic enrichment programs for children and in ESL classes for adults.

What is Elite Open School?

Since 1987, Elite Education Group has been a globally recognized leader in K-12 education and American college preparatory education but for nearly the past two decades has been pressing forward in non-profit, outreach ventures across the world.

In 2006, the Center for Future Global Leaders (CFGL) was founded to search for and award college scholarships to high school juniors and seniors who have attained exceptional levels of achievement, as well as having demonstrated strong commitment to serve their communities through hardships and disadvantages in life. Elite also began operating non-profit learning centers outside of the United States in partnership with other service organizations with the ultimate mission to deliver quality, sustainable education to underserved communities, particularly in areas of poverty and conflict. The motto of all coordinated efforts was at the time, "Reach One, Teach One," symbolizing our individual student-centric approach to changing the course of communities and nations, one child at a time.

In 2015, Elite Open School (EOS) was founded and accredited as a part of the continued mission of CFGL to bring the fruits of education to students and families - a better life and stable future. With a particular focus on technology-accelerated digital learning, EOS has, for the first time, been able to bring the original vision of quality, individualized education to the far reaches of the world in conflict.

Solutions Unique to Elite Open School

Elite Open School (EOS) is a micro-school utilizing digital curriculum in blended classroom settings. That is, students communicate remotely with teachers via the online messaging system, but receive individual mentoring via in-person staff in the blended learning classrooms. This learning model allows the student to get targeted help in issues ranging from time management, cognitive difficulties and motivational issues.

Additionally, the digital curriculum allows each student to go through the content at his or her own pace. This self-pacing means that teaching and learning happens at the individual speed, rather than at the whole classroom, so students can accelerate through concepts or slow down based on each student's individual level of understanding. By making learning more efficient and focused, EOS enables students to set their own learning hours, freeing up time to pursue other interests outside of school. Students can bring their core schooling with them, wherever they are.

The EOS Objective

EOS, with the support of the Elite Education Group and local partners, is bringing flexible, transferrable, accredited education pathways to children in regions of conflict to secure for them a better and more stable future.

Refugees in Indonesia

For decades past, there have been displaced peoples across the world, many traveling far from their native homelands, becoming refugees for indeterminable lengths of time and while there has always been attention for health and food outreach services, there has not been as much limelight on education.

One of these areas of crisis and need is Bogor, Indonesia. Bogor is located 55km outside of Jakarta and has a population of about 1 million. As of 2016, UNHCR reports that there are about 14,000 displaced people in Indonesia, including those accepted for resettlement and those in detention centers, awaiting deportation back to their countries.

Indonesia is not a signatory to the UNHCR's 1951 Refugee Convention, which outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them. As such, refugees who arrived in Indonesia through forced migration were in legal limbo, until the President of the Republic of Indonesia signed the Presidential Regulation on the Handling of Refugees, setting out legal processes for detection, shelter and safeguarding of refugees and asylees. These new standards allow refugees to come out of the shadows in Indonesia and apply for protection and resettlement in a new country (such as Australia, Canada and until recently, the U.S.) through the UNHCR.

However, the Presidential Regulation does not provide refugees with rights to education, work or healthcare. Thus, although refugees' status in Indonesia has become more protected since 2016, the process of working with the UNHCR for resettlement can take years and refugees must forego many basic necessities during this long process.

According to the latest education reports, 3.5 million refugee children worldwide did not attend school in 2016. Only 61 % of refugee children attend primary school, compared with a global average of 91 %. As refugee children age, the obstacles to education increase. Just 23 % of refugee adolescents are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 84% globally. For tertiary education the situation is critical. Only 1 % of refugee youth attends university, compared to 36 % globally. For the almost 14,000 refugees in Indonesia, this plight is a daily reality. Indonesia has a long history of welcoming refugees for temporary settlement. But with just 610 refugees permanently resettled in 2015, the majority are left facing an uncertain future.



Establishment of Elite Open School - Hope Campus

In 2017, Elite Open School was approached by friends and partners in Indonesia to tell the story of particular refugee students and families from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, who were caught in transition in Bogor. They were gathering at the site of the Hope Learning Center (HLC) for general courses. These coordinators at Hope Learning Center and the families served were highly interested in the idea of receiving a flexible, individualized, transferrable, and accredited high school education. Within a few months, Elite Open School opened a high school campus at the Hope Learning Center to bring to bear as a first step the advantages of the Elite Open School Blended Learning System. At the time, it had only been attempted in more developed areas, in the great metropolitan cities of the world, for families of means, never those in crisis, but we were determined to prove that our model worked especially well for the transitional and displaced communities.

Educational Aid and Assistance for Refugees

Save the Children, World Vision, Compassion, International Rescue Committee, Kakuma Refugee Camp programs - these are but a few of the most known and longest serving entities and players in the realm of education for the needy. They train local teachers. They have massive international backing, both public and private.

Refugee education has always been a concerted effort between NGOs, international governance and national governments. Such partnerships have brought forth refugee camp education programs, ranging from skills-focused programs to diploma-granting programs in partnership with local governments and ministries of education. Key players such as Save the Children and World Vision have long been first responders in conflicts and emergencies around the world, providing relief in healthcare and education. Indeed, in the longest-lasting conflict areas such as urban refugee camps in Sudan or in Thailand, many programs involving partnerships with local governments have been created.

However, there are some key limitations related to their relative strengths. They are all mostly focused on health and hunger issues so the education provided focuses primarily on the like. It is our belief that on top of these limitations, there are 2 questions outstanding: (1) Can these students be given a complete education, accredited or certified so that it can be continued in whatever country or location the families end up in next? (2) Can these students carry out an education to the point of college readiness to the point of an American high school diploma? The answer through EOS is, "Yes."

Elite's Approach

Our plan for these families is extremely simple:

1. An accredited American high school diploma that will be the key to unlock global potential for higher education opportunities
2. Acquisition of skillsets that are currently and will be in high demand in any workplace like Coding and Programming.
3. Mastery of English Proficiency to communicate and collaborate with others around the world.

These three goals are not just for students in Bogor or for refugee families - **these are the goals that we strive for all of Elite students around the world.** It is our belief that we should give these students no less than the standards we set for other students. The reasons prior attempts at education fail for refugees is that the goals themselves are watered down for the critical situations of time and place. But in this modern age, technology has advanced such that we do not have to compromise academic quality wherever we are in the world. Thus, it has been a fruitful and reflective first semester to report on regarding the attainment of these primary objectives.

First Semester of Operation

Hope Learning Center (HLC) was founded by refugees living in the Cisarua neighborhood of Bogor, in order to serve the educational and social needs of this community. All staff members are volunteers and the center operations are funded through donations. 7 out of 9 volunteer teachers at HLC have higher education degrees from their home countries.

EOS established high school operations for the HLC academic team and its students, to provide a better, comprehensive, and goal oriented pathway:

- **Developing English Language proficiency**

Our blended learning programs include additional English language support in the form of bilingual instruction: mentors/learning coaches at our Learning Resource Centers are proficient both in the student's dominant language and in English, so they are able to support students' learning. Students' learning does not solely take place online, as they are also able to have academic tutoring in person.

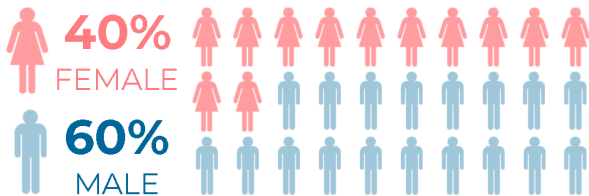
- **Learning to Program through specialty Coding Classes**

EOS academic counseling provides counseling that helps students select classes that will prepare them for their chosen major and eventually their careers. One of these counseling "tracks" emphasizes coding/computer science. These self-paced, self-directed classes are scaffolded from basic levels of Web Design and Introduction to Computing Ideas all the way to Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science. Completing the classes on this track certifies the students for not only competitive admissions into Computer Science undergraduate degree programs but also entry-level jobs in programming.



Hope Campus

Student Demographics



Age range: 14 to 23

Average age: 17 years

HLC students have been in Indonesia anywhere from 1 to 6 years.

Onboarding, Training and Tech Setup

Prior to the beginning of the school semester, the staff of Elite Prep Bandung assisted in bringing in computers and internet connectivity to Hope Learning Center. Initial set-up consisted of 15 centrally managed study stations, controlled and overseen by the Hope Campus teachers through a primary server computer.

The issue of technology was a fascinating facet of the entire project - one that precluded the possibility of this entire attempt just 10 years ago. The computer lab that we had designed through collaboration with a regional tech company was built to our specific needs and specifications. We knew we needed a workspace that would be low in cost, primarily maintenance free, drew low power from the local grid, and efficiently processed streaming network bandwidth through spotty and unsteady bandwidth. So far, the system build to specifications has worked very well.

The director of the center then selected four staff members (one each in the four core content areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science and History) to serve as teacher-mentors at this campus. Before the academic semester began, the Head of School conducted trainings via videoconferencing, including topics such as:

1. Using the EOS Learning Management System
2. Best practices for mentoring students
3. How to lead blended learning projects using available printable lesson materials

We set the expectation that students at the HLC campus would have access to the same quality academic programs as other full-pay EOS students in U.S., Japan, Korea, China and other parts of world. Similarly, HLC students are also held accountable to the same school-wide academic standards.

Academics

Prior to their enrollment in Elite's sequenced, Common Core-aligned and University of California's a-g subject requirements approved curriculum, students at the Hope Learning Center were taking coursework from the Cambridge IGCSE program. This curriculum came to HLC in the form of books going up the U.S. equivalent of Grade 5.

However, given that the students' average age was about 17 years, this curriculum was not adequately serving the students' academic needs. Additionally, classes were taught irregularly without trained staff, adequate placement, and reliable assessments. Combined with the need to get used to a new, digital system that would be more regimented and rigorous, EOS and HLC staff together made the decision to keep all students at the same grade level. As the previous formal schooling that the students had received ended at Grade 5, students were enrolled in Grade 6 classes in the Core subjects:

Grade 6 English / Language Arts
Grade 6 Math
Grade 6 Science
World History I

We deemed it acceptable to place the students in these very low levels because:

1. During the first few days of the semester, there was some need for the students and staff at HLC to get used to the system. In order to avoid unnecessary overloading of information that could have led to drop-outs, we decided to keep the academics as accessible as possible.
2. The self-paced curriculum means that students can speed up during concepts that they find easy. This would allow for students to finish the curriculum at a much faster rate. As expected, they finished these year-long courses in a 10 weeks, with all in the A-range.

Mid-Semester Academic Performance

Average grades per class

Grade 6 English / Language Arts:	95.0 %
Grade 6 Math:	94.4 %
Grade 6 Science:	95.3 %
World History I:	91.2 %

As seen from the above, students were able to progress through the course at a record pace and achieved scores averaging in the A-range. In addition to assessments focusing on knowledge retention and recall, students also participated in small group discussion sessions with EOS staff living in Indonesia. These discussions in World History and English/Language Arts allowed students to synthesize and debate materials that they learned through the online platform.

Challenges & Mitigations

While the academic term has progressed well, it has not been without issues.

Description	Mitigation
<p>Hope Learning Center is located in the neighborhood where most refugee families live; these areas tend to have less-developed infrastructure than other parts of Bogor. Thus, usual technology issues such as internet connectivity and bandwidth were exacerbated by the fact that fewer internet cables were routed through these neighborhoods, and that the power supply was affected by weather, as cables tended to be affected by frequent, heavy rains in the region.</p>	<p>We have sought partnerships with and sponsorships from major telecommunications companies in the region to install more secure and reliable connections. We have also taken receipt of cellular Wi-Fi hotspot devices to combat network instability of current local broadband services. Lastly, there are also paper-based lessons in place as failsafe from the region losing power entirely that can be assessed or uploaded later when data connections are restored.</p>
<p>Teacher retention was also a point of concern. All HLC staff are employed on a voluntary basis and in addition, these volunteers are also themselves refugees. As such, the teachers - like the students - are seeking more stability of their status in Indonesia. For example, one teacher left the campus area after being offered a permanent job. Thus, incentivizing teachers to stay on through a semester is a point of concern.</p>	<p>We have launched a more comprehensive career development path for volunteer teachers by giving them a pathway of self-development and training. They are able to continue their own educations via our Continuing Education or CTE (Vocational) coursework and build out their resumes for their own transitions in the future. We are also working with local organizations to better structure their compensation and elevate standards of workplace conditions even beginning with communications training.</p>
<p>Students are seeking legal status as refugees, so when they get the chance, they move to refugee encampments that were set up by a variety of organizations, some legitimate and some not. Because of this, six students left the school a few weeks into the semester. The staff at Hope Learning Center lamented the fact that students were oftentimes taking unwarranted risks to hurry along the process of resettlement out of Indonesia.</p>	<p>We have started with regular and comprehensive community information seminars and workshops so that these families could be more and more informed and empowered to make their own decisions regarding their political status and their children's education pathway. Also, we continue to press for some level of local government validation that while not openly certified by the government, our education campuses like Hope Learning Center are the preferred solution for children and families to stabilize their situations.</p>

Opportunities and Threats to Scalability

First and foremost, we are fully conservatively confident that our students are well on track, at the current rate of progress, to satisfy our American high school graduation requirements. But our most impactful progress can be seen in the adoption and accelerated interest and advancement of learning in the coursework areas of English and Computer Science. Not only are these faculty and students seizing the opportunity to master both according to a course by course plan, they are proud, and rightfully so, of meeting the standards of our students around the world. *They are treated no differently and thus they achieve no differently than our full-tuition students of the great metropolises of the world.*

Given this successful initial semester, we plan to scale up our operations firstly by expanding this program to other refugee students in the Bogor area. As one limiting factor is the number of available computers, HLC staff will institute a rotating schedule of computer time so that more numbers of students can enroll in the program. The successful implementation of a rotating computer schedule will allow us to accommodate about 100 or so new students who are eager to enroll in the program.

Conclusion

Eventually, our experiences and development of this program will lay the foundation for EOS sites in other regions of the world where refugee children find themselves in unpredictable geo-political settings. With these efforts, we hope to build upon current refugee education models around the world, using their knowledge base of what works but trying to address their scalability issues by bringing a more sequenced, accredited approach to schooling for refugee students.

To our knowledge, there is a lack of programs that provide the same flexibility, rigor and accreditation that EOS provides, conflict regions notwithstanding, and as such, EOS would fulfill a distinct need in refugee education, especially with the ability for students to earn an accredited U.S. high school diploma while they await resettlement, or continue to achieve no matter how mobile their circumstances may become, so long as they have a tablet and WiFi.

In the regions of crisis and socioeconomic struggle in the world, children need quality education that can be their stability and hope for a better future and transferrable education that can carry or transition to wherever the future holds for them and their families. The need is more pressing now than ever before. We at EOS are proud to show that the future of digital, personalized, blended learning has potential to equalize the education gap around the world in ways that we could not have imagined just 10 years ago and we look forward to continuing to see the next phase of challenges and solutions as we grow our coverage around the world.



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